



The Behaviour of Consumer Society in Consuming Food at Restaurants and Cafes

Sri Astuti, Himasari Hanan

1Architecture doctoral student, Researcher Research Institute for Human Settlements
2 Head of Architectural History, Theory and Criticism Research Division,
School of Architecture, Planning and Policy Development,
Institute of Technology Bandung.

sasti@bdg.centrin.net.id

Abstract

Commodity consumption behaviour in eating places is heavily influenced by design factors, either its atmosphere or serving facilities. The preferences of eating places are influenced by the social class of people. The study aims to gain insight on people's behaviour at restaurants and cafes associated with the design of the eating places. Based on the observations made on three eating places, there are different eating place preference behaviours. Besides its design and facilities, however, there are two types of eating places, which are used either to consume the food served or to enjoy the atmosphere of the place.

Keywords: Eating place, eating behaviour, design factors, Bandung.

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1.0 Introduction

Bandung is a destination where people come from other places to shop and spend their holidays or weekends. The current growth of the fashion factory outlets results in the establishment of restaurants and cafes to capture these outside visitors. The growth of the eating places is in line with the growth of the fashion and accessory shops in Bandung. Even now, it seems that the market has begun to seize culinary from the fashion market. The increasing number of restaurants and cafes in Bandung allows a variety of culinary tourism commodity. To satisfy the needs of the consumers, several restaurants and cafes have brought together specific foods to be located in one area as the food market. Food markets allow the interior and ambience to represent the varied social classes of the patrons.

As a basic need, food consuming will continue to exist. However, it is also influenced by a lifestyle and culture. Different lifestyles and cultures lead to different types of food consuming behaviours. Food has always been more about entertainment and fashion than about sustenance (Sloan, 2004: 60). Food consuming which was originally a domestic activity but it has shifted outside the house and become a leisure activity with a need to spend time for pleasure. The shifting of a basic need function in the house changes outside the house, either with friends or family resulting in the emergence of various eating places for different classes of society. Restaurants and cafes are not simply for pleasure and fun, but are also places for business such as meetings and for discussions or other social functions.

A lot of researches have been done on the services of restaurants and cafes and their behaviour. The conscious social behaviour that encourages the eating place design as a commodity, especially in Bandung, shows that the emergence of the restaurant and cafe phenomena is mostly caused by consumer behaviour, both residents of Bandung as well as tourists who want to enjoy dishes that are rarely served at home. In addition, consuming food in these eating places helps the patrons to relieve stress, experience a new atmosphere, for pleasure as well as for business activities. The existence of these eating places has become the answer to a changing lifestyle and has changed the lifestyle of urban communities. These have resulted in a high number (484) of restaurants and cafes in Bandung (Bandung Tourism Office, 2010) not including the restaurants and cafes that are integrated in malls, hotels and other business areas. Even when the social functions of the building is strong it is not necessary that the organisation of the building is separated (Clovis Heimsath, 1977) while different ethnic groups literary take turns in using a particular restaurant and avoiding the place when others are there (Irwin Altman, 1980). Groups of people locate themselves in spaces according to a clear pattern. People tend to sit at the table around the periphery of the restaurant rather than at those in the middle (Canter, 1974). This paper will discuss the behaviour of the consumer society consuming food at restaurants and cafes as a commodity obsession. The purpose of this paper is to understand the roles of the architecture and design of the restaurant and cafe on consumer

society.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Consuming Food at Restaurants and Cafes as a Characteristics of the Consumer Society

The condition of the consumer's society resulted from the modernisation developed in the community since the early 20th century. It began to emerge in the West as a result of the rapid growth of industrialisation, in production or trade and the enactment of the new regulation standard in the various aspects. The social effect of the consumer society is the emergence of new values in society, both in social relations and culture when consuming food for instance or as a creative process. The emergence of these differences is no longer valued as the product itself, but is judged by the lifestyle needs in the new society, where its development is strongly influenced by the mass media, peer group and performed for the sake of pursuing social status.

Jean Baudrillard, a France philosopher argues that the characteristics of the consumer society is the condition where people create 'consume' as a centre of life: shaped by consuming, live from consuming, and is a community with a passion that always wants to consume. In a consumer society, people often spend a lot of money purchasing goods not actually produced for basic needs. As a society, they want to invest an enormous amount of money in some less priority product, as shown in advertising, while neglecting certain other important priorities, like health, education, famine relief, and so forth.

The urban lifestyle experiences a shift and simulation which causes values to be neglected without reasoning. The object of consumption as a commodity does not merely have the benefit of value and exchange, but in a consumer society, a commodity must have sign and symbol values. A commodity will be useful and valuable if the code that determines it is associated with myth (Ahlava, 2002). Signs and ideas are something consumed since an object or sign has no real meaning in the social relationship of the consumer society.

Buying, using and disposing of commodities connect us to other people and other places in ways which may be beyond our imagination. Commodities are more than just objects; they are shifting assemblages of social relations, they take the place and accept the form and meaning of time and space (Mansvelt, 2005). For many individuals, consumption is both the visible and a pervasive part of everyday life in contemporary society. A trip to a restaurant may be as a taken-for-granted aspect of everyday life for many, but this action plays a critical role in the significant creation and expression of place. Consumption is fundamental to how geographies are made and experienced in a contemporary society. Geographies, as the spatial expression of social and physical, are in turn integral to how consumption is constituted and articulated. A key theme is the necessity

of acknowledging consumption, that is, how it takes and makes meaning as it is created and expressed across space and time. Consumption is fluid and contextual, and fabricated differentially and unevenly across space (Mansvelt, 2005).

Architecture, is 'consumed' by people, and is thus an example of consumer behaviour. The main characteristics of the postmodern wave according Toffler, (1970) are: demassification, fragmentation, individualisation, and an increased speed of change.

The major causes of postmodern changes are social and technical. The social changes characteristics are: individualisation, fragmentation, and paradoxical juxtapositions, while the technical changes are: hyper reality, complexity, and value realisation. According to (Jencks, 1987) the characteristics of the postmodern period are global view, fast changing in cyclical model oriented in global view, multinational, pluralist eclectic and inclusive, with the taste in postmodernism depending on culture and genre.

2.2 Social Role of Food

Irrespective of a society's economic organisation as agrarian, feudal, capitalist, or communal countries, food is always part of an elaborate symbol that conveys cultural messages. Food is a good representation in modern social life. For example, where, and what we eat, with whom, and what time of day or night are directly affected by a variety of factors and mundane personal attributes such as status, gender, age, sexuality, and the food served. Food is also capable of representing ephemeral personal qualities such as élan and sangfroid (Sloan, 2004). Bell and Valentine (Bell & Valentine, 1997) have noted that eating can tell us something about ourselves and about our place. The restaurant is a mode (Sloan, 2004), in the nineteenth century, Paris was described as having a restaurant on every corner of the city, similar to Bandung's condition today. Paris has provided every conceivable taste and became the well-recognised icon of the city.

2.3 Food as Commodity

The idea of food as a source of entertainment is the dining experience, since the development of gastronomy. The changes in eating activity which have become part of the entertainment activities have encouraged the development of consuming food as a cultural industry. Consuming and producing food as a leisure activity can cause boredom. Consumers experience boredom in consuming the same food, just as they experience sensory and intellectual boredom in consuming other products. Food consuming culture can explore new ideas in the eating culture as an entertainment and generate new experiences to overcome this boredom.

Boredom is a state of mind associated with the routine and boredom is found in the patterns of life from very bureaucratic industries (Finkelstein, 2003). Boredom is closely related to the dissatisfaction index, and can be resolved with actions, desires, and the willingness to have the freedom to choose. This is the reason for the emergence of mass consumption, which promises more fashionable commodities to get rid of boredom.

Consuming food outside the house is also a human activity, other than shopping, in response to the difficulties faced in everyday life. Consuming food outside the house is therefore a human behaviour in getting rid of boredom, but on the other hand, repeat consuming of the same food will continue to cause boredom. This has led to mass products with diversity differences that bring diversity of dining options.

2.4 Commodity Aesthetics

A design in capitalist society has a function and aesthetics concept where it includes appearance supported by advertising and is three-dimensional which sometimes has the allusion of taste and atmosphere. This occurs because the market is flooded by too many varieties of commodities forcing producers to differentiate their products from others with a different aesthetic quality as well. In a consumer society, architecture is seen as a commodity, which is consumed as a reproduction of ideas.

Commodities are objects in our surroundings that meet the human desires and are acceptable for user satisfaction, often referred to as symbolic value and exchange value. Symbolic value refers to the object whereas exchange value refers to its tradability. Architecture, by definition is built for people, where people live in. The word behaviour suggests people in action, with things to do, with other people to talk to and interact with. Behaviour suggests awareness of the social fabric of people, a moving together dynamically in time. Aesthetics in commodity is what supports the life style of people's activities, especially in capitalist people where the design is not only a function. The restaurant and cafe are samples of this design and the public function is integrated in becoming a commodity

2.5 Factors that Influences and Variables of Consuming Places

In terms of social sciences, research in commodification of place as consuming places shows that the choice of eating places is strongly influenced by the physical conditions and social conditions of the consumer society (Urry, 1995). Places are created through the work of architecture. Developments and improvements of city infrastructure lead to increase in tourist traffic and stimulate the growth of tourism. Bandung for instance, has been known as a tourist destination for its natural potential. However, since 1998, there has been an increase in shopping activities after the Jakarta – Bandung toll road was opened and after the introduction of direct international flights to Bandung. In a consuming place, the architecture is a wrap that is a first sight of consumption product that can be left behind by consumers. Therefore, it needs to be different, individualistic, and highly influenced by the success of media campaign. In consuming places, it is often the consumers who become the target of media campaigns.

Consumers are not faced with the real product, but faced with the market related to identity, particularly taste, and individualistic lifestyle and locality context. On top of that, consumers are used as objects of machinery product and abstract cultural products,

resulted from reproducing ideas and values. It is considered as leisure activities that are common occurrence in a consumer society. Therefore, it is necessary to first understand the behaviour of the consumer society in consuming food. On the other hand, consuming food is not only a basic need; it is also a need for social function, since consuming food represents a symbolic system.

3.0 Methodology

According to the literature reviews, there are eight key factors that affect people's behaviour in consuming places which can be summarised as follows: 1. Consumer society behaviour, 2. Visitor groups, 3. Social functions of food to consume, 4. Food as commodity, 5. Consume aesthetics, 6. Consuming places, 7. Initial building functions, food selling and food consume 8. Behaviour of consume.

Behaviour of consumer society in this research is compared at three places which are at shopping areas, a university and a business activity area. The first area is in the south of central Bandung, the second in the centre of central Bandung and the third is in the north of central Bandung

The data were collected using the observation method, with independent variable time, gender, age, length of time consume, visitor group, activities, food sold and consumed, initial building function, and the atmosphere. The time of observation was around dinner while the considered day was in the end of the week, and in the middle of the month. This meant that it was not the peak hour but at a moderate time and workday. The duration of the observation time was two hours in each place, to capture a time use for order and eating and other activity they used after, or during eating times. The data were analysed by comparing one another and interpreting the behaviour of the consumers

4.0 Results and Discussions

Base on the observation, the cafe which is a coffee shop has become an urban lifestyle in Bandung, where it is mostly able to convey a high class image with a low price and comfort. Food is also able to represent personal qualities such as cosmopolitanism and conservatism, depending on where the foods are developed.

Arranged in a food court format, The Kiosk, is located on the upstairs of a building which has several choices of food. The food sold there consist of the famous local foods from different parts of Bandung – as they got more famous and people started looking for it, The Kiosk owner might built more and more branches in places around Bandung. Some types of the foods sold were bubur ayam (chicken porridge), goat sate, ketoprak and gado-gado (Indonesian salad with peanut sauce), some tofu and Chinese cuisine. The place is comfortable and the food stalls look clean. It is a good place to accommodate different preferences from different members of a group. These hawkers initially sold foods in mobile

carts, now they are placed in a more representative and clean place, still in their carts but completed with modern cooking utensils.

Another restaurant and cafe is 'Ngopi Doeloe' which is an international branded coffee house with cheaper rates. This place is mostly a hangout place as opposed to an eating place.

Black Market is similar to The Kiosk, they also accommodate a representative place for hawkers to sell traditional foods.

Table 1: Observation of Consuming Food in Restaurant & Café

Variable	Location :		Restaurant and cafe			
	Black Market		The Kiosk		Ngopi Doeloe	
Day observe two times	Wednesday		Wednesday		Wednesday	
Time (Average time for dinner)	18.00-19.00		18.00-19.00		18.00-19.00	
Gender : Female / Man (Average)	F	M	F	M	F	M
	10	17	32	36	41	59
Age (range) years	12 - 60		20 - 60		20 - 40	
length of time consume (Average)	1 hour		1 hour		2 – more hours	
Visitor group (Average)	2- 4 persons		2-6 persons		More than 2 until 15 persons	
Activities (Majority)	eat		eat		Discussion, work	
Food sold	Main course and snack		Main course and snack		Low priced snack	
Favourite menu	Traditional and local menu		Traditional and local menu		Snacks (chips and pizza)	
Initial building function	Bank, house		House		House	
The atmosphere	Middle class		High class and comfort		High class and comfort	

According to the data observed, there were two types of restaurants and cafes; the first as consuming menu, and the other as consuming place. This meant that one could just eat or work and eat at these places. Table 1 shows the comparisons among the three restaurants and cafes.

Based on the observations, some visitors almost always had correlation to other activities around the buildings. The design area had no comfortable linkage among one another, since these visitors came to shop at the surrounding buildings. The visitors usually came from the middle class society. On weekends, many people came from Jakarta.

The location of the restaurants and cafes was important, since consumers came for shopping. This meant that 'Black Market' and 'The Kiosk' were places only for eating, since they only had eating facilities. Therefore the location of these restaurants and cafes were near the shopping areas. The other kind of eating place was the cafe which was visited

mainly by students or for business. This café was located near a campus and it offered cheap food, and provided Wi-Fi facility, music, and TV, and a long term sitting arrangement. In fact it was opened 24 hours a day.

Those three eating places can be categorized into two types. The first one is an eating place where people only come to enjoy the foods, spending leisure time or to enjoy the atmosphere of their international or local or traditional setting. While the second type of the eating place is usually a coffee shop setting where they provide lighter meal or snacks and people come to this place to work, for meeting, or to go online with their laptop.

5.0 Conclusion

The restaurant and cafe in this paper referred to a place where food is consumed outside the house. It is leisure activity that commonly occurs in a consumer society. Therefore, it is necessary to first understand how the behaviour of the consumer society is in consuming food. On the other hand, consuming food is not only a basic need, but there is also the need for social function, since consuming food represents a symbolic system. That is why this activity becomes a commodity. The type of eating place is determined by facilities it sells, which could be a consuming menu or a place according to the target market. There are two types of restaurant and cafe consumers; the first who consume using a menu and the other is according to the place. The latter are usually young people while the former are the families. Therefore, today's eating places are not just places only for eating but also as places with many functions, such as for socialisation, eating, waiting, hanging out, working, and discussing. This consuming society behaviour determines the eating place setting, showing that in Bandung, social activity outside the home is consumed mostly by younger people where they are not only enjoy foods but also socializing.

The first type of restaurant and cafe is through a menu since they need other places for fashion and other commodity buying. The impact to the environment and society is somewhat the accessible transportation, and comfortable pedestrian areas to reach from one place to another.

The second type is a place to consume where people come just because of its place, consuming time and activity in the restaurant and cafe itself. They usually need not visit other places.

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